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AN ESSAY TOWARD THE CRITICAL TEXT OF THE A-VERSION OF "PIERS THE PLOWMAN"

The interest of students of Middle English literature in the Piers Plowman poems was greatly stimulated several years ago by two articles by Professor John M. Manly, "The Lost Leaf of 'Piers the Plowman'"¹ and "'Piers the Plowman' and Its Sequence."² I was so fortunate as to be a student under Professor Manly in 1905, when his belief in the diversity of authorship of the several versions was daily receiving fresh confirmation from his investigations, and we recognized the need for an adequate critical text in order that the differences between the three versions might be determined satisfactorily. Accordingly, in my first subsequent vacation, in the summer of 1907, I began the necessary work by collating the fourteen MSS of the A-version as far as 8.130 (Skeat's numbering),³ with the object of studying their relationship to one another, and attempting to settle the existing uncertainties of the text. This work I have since been carrying on as time and opportunity offered, and the results I now publish in this essay. The critical text, with the collations, must wait until similar work on the B- and C-versions has been finished (when all will be printed

¹ *Modern Philology*, III (January, 1906), 359-66.

² *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, II (1908), 1-42.

³ This study of the critical text covers only the prologue and the first eight passus to 8.130 because it is at this point that Mr. Manly (and I) believe the work of A1 ceases. This line marks the close of the most vigorous, the most readable, and the best organized part of the A-text.

together), but the text I hope to publish in a short time in the form of a reading edition.

For the A-text there are fourteen MSS, some of which unfortunately are not complete, and some of which are not pure A-text throughout. A table of these MSS, showing what each contains, and where each is defective, and where any one is B- or C-text, may be helpful to the student, and therefore is appended.¹

I. Vernon Codex. Omits 1.176-83 (178-85) and 2.106-21 (111-27).

II. Harleian 875. Omits 6.49-7.2 (6.52-7.2).

III. Ingilby. IV. Lincoln's Inn 150. V. Trinity College, Cambridge R 3.14. VI. Rawlinson Poet. 137. All practically complete save for a few sporadic omissions of single lines.

VII. University College, Oxford, 45. Omits 1.33-99 (folio torn out).

VIII. Douce 323. Omits 3.120-34 (128-42).

IX. Harleian 6041. Parts of ff. 23, 24, 26, and 27 are torn out, thus causing the loss of 7.59-74 (60-79), 82-105 (87-110), 115-36 (120-41), 145-87 (150-94), 198-218 (205-25), 228-47 (235-54), 258-78 (265-86); and the loss of parts of 7.53-58 (54-59), 77-81 (82-86), 108-14 (113-19), 139-44 (144-49), 188-97 (195-204), 219-27 (226-34), 248-57 (255-64), 279-89 (287-97).

X. Trinity College, Dublin, D 4.12. Omits 7.45-69 (46-70) and 7.210 (217) to the end. 7.44 (45) is actually the final line in the MS, but 7.69a-209 (71-216) had been transposed in an archetype to a position before 1.180 (182), and therefore were preserved.

XI. Ashmole 1468. Begins at 1.142, because the preceding leaves have been cut out; then omits 2.18-145 (18-158); 3.30-33 (32-35), 112-226 (120-235); 7.33-81 (34-86); 8.32-80 (32-81), all but 3.30-33 because leaves have been cut out.

XII. Harleian 3954. Is B-text to (B) 5.128, then A-text from (A) 5.106-8.111 (5.107-8.113), then omits to 9.97. No extended omissions.

XIII. The Duke of Westminster's MS. Inserts a large number of lines and passages from the B- and C-texts: B 1.32-33 after A 1.31; B 1.113-16 after A 1.111; C 3.28-29 after A 2.20; C 1.84-87, 89, 92, 98-100, 102-4 after A 2.65 (68); C 3.185-88 after A 2.130 (140); C 3.243-48 after A 2.194 (208); C 4.32-33 after A 3.33 (35); B 4.17-18 after A 4.17; B 4.62 after A 4.48; B 4.119-22 after A 4.105; then follows A 108, then B 4.123-25; B 4.152-56 after A 4.143; B 4.165-70 after A 4.145; B 5.36-41 after A 5.33; B 5.49-56 after A 5.39; B 5.60 after A 5.42; B 5.87-93 after A 5.68 (69); B 5.120-21 after A 5.98 (99).

¹ The line numbers in this paper refer to the Critical Text, but in order to facilitate reference until that is published, I give *in parentheses* the line numbering of Skeat's Early English Text Society edition, wherever the number in the CT differs from Skeat's.

XIV. Digby 145. No extended omissions. Has several contaminations from the C-text, especially in the prologue, which is chiefly C, with some readings from A. The other insertions are B 3.52-54, 56-58 after A 3.45 (47); C 7.423-8.55 after A 5.220 (228); then A 5.215-20 (223-28) is repeated; (Digby changes 214 (222) so that it reads "this glotoun" for "sleupe"); C 8.70-154 after A 5.251 (259); C 8.189-306 substituted for A 6.31-123 (34-126).

As the basis of my text I have used MS R 3.14 in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, represented in my paper by "T." By "basis" I mean, of course, not that I shall print that MS as it stands, nor with such occasional readings from other MSS as may "seem better" to me. On the contrary, the readings adopted into the CT must always be the critical readings, as attested in every case by the weight of evidence, genealogical and other. No matter how plausible the reading of T may seem, it must not be retained if not supported. By "basis" I mean, therefore, little more than the basis for spelling and dialect, for whenever the reading of T is replaced by the critical reading, it seems better to make the latter conform in spelling and dialect to T. Otherwise we should have a critical text containing too many inconsistent forms and spellings. In every case, of course, when the apparatus is printed, the footnotes will record all variants from the CT, including those of T.

MS T was chosen as the basis of the CT because it is early (shortly after 1400), because it is well spelled, and because it contains comparatively few individual deviations and errors, and therefore probably requires less changing to make it a critical text than any other MS. It should be said that the CT would have been exactly what it is, save for dialect and spelling, no matter what particular MS had been chosen for a basis.

The numbering of the lines differs in this paper from that of Skeat in his E.E.T.S. and Oxford editions, because I have numbered the lines of the CT, and of course the CT does not contain the unsupported expansions and the spurious lines, contained in only one MS, some of which Skeat admitted into his text.

The following lines in the E.E.T.S. edition have been rejected in the CT because they occur only in MS Harleian 875:1.176-77; 2.31, 34, 48, 96, 118, 136-39, 141-43, 182; 3.19-20, 66, 91-94, 98,

234; 5.182; 6.1-2, 5; 7.26; 8.46, 101, 125-26. One line is rejected because it is in V only: 7.286. In two cases one line of the CT has been expanded into two by V: 5.55-56; 7.157-58; the CT numbering in each case is reduced to one line. One line is in H, and, with some differences, in H₂: 2.79. 5.202-7 are in only UT₂AH₃; that is, in one small sub-subgroup, often contaminated from the B-text, and one other MS; the lines are a contamination from the B-text, and are therefore rejected from the CT. Lines 7.71-74, containing the names of Piers's wife and children, are an interpolation, and are therefore omitted.¹ Lines 7.180-81 are an expansion of one line, and, though contained in MSS V, H, and I, are reduced to one line in the CT.

It is hardly necessary to recount here in great detail the processes that must go toward the determination of a critical text. Adequate expositions of these processes have long been accessible, especially in the Introduction to Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament, and in Edward Moore's *Contributions to the Textual Criticism of the "Divina Comedia," "Prolegomena"*; and the principles have been admirably stated recently by Dr. Eleanor Prescott Hammond in her *Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual*, pp. 106-13.

The older method of printing a text was to select an old, well-spelled, well-written MS, the readings of which seemed to the editor to give "the best sense." In case of dissatisfaction with a reading, support for it was looked for in other MSS, and, if support failed, a reading was adopted from some other MS or MSS which the editor thought gave the "best sense." This "eclectic" method was unscientific and unreliable for two reasons: The editor left in his text a large number of readings which gave "good smooth sense," but some of which were sophisticated, that is, introduced by copyists who were practicing conjectural emendation; and others of which (introduced carelessly) were intelligible, but which could not be supported by scientific proof. Secondly, this method laid too much responsibility on the unchecked discretion of the editor, who often adopted a reading merely because it was in the greater number of MSS, and who, on the other hand, often adopted readings merely according to his whim or his personal taste.

¹ *Cambridge History of English Literature*, II, 33; and my forthcoming article in *Modern Philology*.

The dangers arising from the exercise of personal taste or whim, and from reliance on mere number of MSS, are avoided by the critical method. A reading must not be valued according to the number of supporting MSS, for a large number of MSS may be, and often are, descended from one common ancestor, from which the reading has been transmitted to its descendants.

The necessity is therefore evident for classifying all extant MSS according to their family relationships, and for constructing a family tree, before anything is done toward determining what readings ought to be adopted in the text.

Two or more MSS, or two or more groups of MSS, are assigned to an identical, hypothetically reconstructed ancestor, or archetype, if they possess in common a number of clear errors, omissions, and additions. Common errors, deviations, and omissions in two or more MSS must be due to coincidence, or to contamination, or to their existence in the MS from which copies were made. If there are more than a very few significant errors, the laws of probability forbid attributing them to coincidence. If two MSS, copied from two entirely different archetypes, were afterward compared, and a number of erroneous readings were transferred from one to the other by the collator, the position of descendants of the contaminated MS in the family tree would be very difficult to determine. For these descendants would contain the erroneous readings and deviations which were their legitimate inheritance, and also those which resulted from the contamination, and the text critic would find it difficult, if not impossible, to determine the real position of the MSS. But one characteristic will enable him to locate such MSS with some degree of certainty, and thus to determine which are contaminations and which are legitimately descended errors. *Omissions* are not the result of contamination. We have a number of A-text MSS of "Piers the Plowman" which contain readings inserted or substituted in different or later hands or inks than the original hand and ink.¹ In several of these MSS lines or words are inserted which were omitted by the original scribe, or lines are inserted from the B-text. *But in no case is any line or word or passage expunged.* Possessors of MSS who compared them with

¹ E.g., T, H₂, D, W, Di, T₂, R, I, H.

other MSS seem to have thought that their own MSS were defective or wrong whenever they differed or omitted anything, but not when they contained lines, words, or passages which the other MSS omitted. The possession of any considerable number of common omissions, therefore, unless they can be accounted for on some other definite grounds, makes a very strong case for common descent.

Common ancestry is of course rendered more certain if all the MSS of a group possess also a considerable number of other variants (not necessarily errors) different from the readings common among the MSS of other groups.

It needs to be especially emphasized that the common possession of the *correct* reading by several MSS is no proof at all that these MSS are members of a group.

After the genealogical tree of the extant MSS has been plotted, the determination of the reading of the Original in a given passage is usually comparatively simple, especially if more than two independent lines of descent from the Original copy have been established. In the latter case, the agreement between all lines of descent but one settles the text. In case, however, each one of three lines of descent has its own peculiar reading, the determination of the original reading is beset with greater difficulty. The three readings must then be carefully examined to see whether one of them may have been based on one of the others. If so, that settles the text. Sometimes, however, the three readings all look equally like the reading of the Original. In such a case, if one of the three main groups has a smaller total number of errors and deviations than either of the others, that group should be followed here, because, as a matter of probability, it is here less likely to be in error than either of the others.

A distinction should be made between the Critical Text and the Genealogical Text. The Genealogical Text may contain some errors, as all extant MSS may be derived eventually from a copy of the Author's Original that itself contained some errors. In a few cases our Genealogical Text is not the Critical Text, which must conjecturally go farther back than the Original of all extant MSS.

The Genealogical Tree

GENERAL SURVEY

It will probably help the reader to follow the detailed study of main groups, subgroups, and sub-subgroups that must now be undertaken if the principal conclusions are briefly summarized in advance.

First of all, the Original of all the extant MSS of the A-text of "Piers the Plowman," and naturally of all the hypothetically reconstructed archetypes, was not the Author's Copy. That it was not is shown by the presence in all MSS of two breaks or gaps where extended passages have been omitted;¹ by the insertion of a scribal marginal note into the wrong place in the text;² by the very probable omission of one line;³ and by the omission of part of one line, making imperfect sense.⁴

The fourteen MSS of the A-text fall into two main groups. Vernon (V) and Harleian 875 (H) belong to the first, *x*.

Trinity College, Cambridge, R 3.14 (T), Harleian 6041 (H₂), Douce 323 (D), University College, Oxford, 45 (U), Rawlinson Poet. 137 (R), Trinity College, Dublin, D 4.12 (T₂), Ashmole 1468 (A), Harleian 3954 (H₃), Digby 145 (Di), the MS belonging to the Duke of Westminster (W), Sir William Ingilby's MS (I), and MS 150 in the Library of Lincoln's Inn (L) belong to the second main group, *y*.

y comprises four subgroups: (1) L, (2) I, (3) W and Di, and (4) TH₂DURT₂AH₃.

The subgroup TH₂DURT₂AH₃ falls into two further subgroups, one containing TH₂D throughout, the other containing T₂AH₃ nearly throughout,⁵ while UR fall with the latter group at the beginning of the poem, and with the former group throughout the remainder of the poem.

¹ With 5-105 (106) the account of Envy is left incomplete, and the account of Wrath is omitted, probably at this point. Between 5.227 (235) and 228 (236) are lost some lines containing the close of Sloth's vow and a transitional passage leading up to the line "And ȝet wile I ȝelde aȝen ȝif I so muchel haue." (See *Modern Philology*, III, 359-66.)

² The four-line passage, 7.69a, b, c, d (7.71-74), giving the names of Piers's wife, daughter, and son, inserted quite erroneously into Piers's remarks about his pilgrimage and his will.

³ A line about Wrath in the feffement, passus 2.

⁴ The Genealogical Text of 4.61 is: "For of hise handy dandy payed."

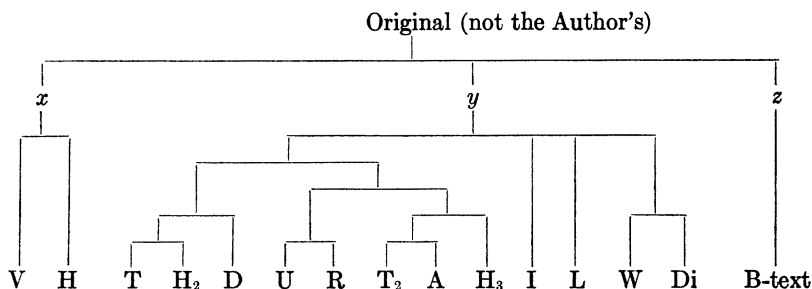
⁵ From 7.69a to 7.209 (71-216), T₂ goes with UR, while AH₃ form a sub-subgroup of equal genealogical weight with TH₂DURT₂.

Within the sub-subgroup TH_2D we have a still further subgroup, TH_2 .

U and R form a separate sub-subgroup throughout, both when they go with TH_2D and when they belong with T_2AH_3 .

The B-text is available to settle doubtful questions, as it is derived from a MS of A not belonging to either x or y . The arche-type of B we may call z .

The family tree of the A-text then is as follows:



For the modifications among $TH_2DURT_2AH_3$ see the subsidiary tables on p. 142.

MSS V AND H—THE GROUP x

The readings proving common ancestry for MSS V and H fall into four classes: (1) clear errors; (2) peculiar deviations; (3) cases where y alliterates and x does not; (4) lines omitted by x .

Belonging to the first class are:

- Prol. 63: But holy chirche and þei holden bet togidere]
 But holychirche bi-ginne holde bet to-gedere V;
 An but hooly church bygynne þe bettere to holde to-gedre H.
1. 54: tutour] toure HV.
1. 104: and such seuene opere] an al þe foure ordres VH(Di).
2. 66 (69): seignourie] seruyse HV.
3. 166 (174): half] nekke VH.
5. 99-100 (100-101): H and V transpose the two second half-lines.

Other errors occur in 2. 30, 73 (76), 97 (102); 3. 31 (33), 235 (244); 5. 128 (129), 163 (164); 8. 78 (79), 103 (105).

Peculiar deviations are:

ProL. 53: from *opere* for *bretheren*, HV.

1.21: *Narn none nedful but þo* Her naames beoþ neodeful, HV.

5.33: *Let no wynnyng for-wanye hem* Let hem wonte non eiþe, VH.

7.91 (96): *putte*, TDiD; *pyche*, LURT₂AIH₃; *posse*, H; *posschen*, V.

Also proL. 76: 1.162; 2.182 (196); 3.15, 143 (151); 4.19, etc.

Alliteration occurs in *y* and not in *x*, presumably by error, in:

ProL. 14: *I saiþ a tour on a toft, triþely I-makid*

I sauh a Tour on a Toft, wonderliche I-maket, VH.

ProL. 41: *Til here belyes and here bagges were breþful ycrammid*

Til heor Bagges and heore Balies weren faste I-crommet, VH.

Also proL. 21, 76; 1.4, 34, 88, etc.

Lines omitted in *x* are:

ProL. 50–51, 99–100, 109; 2.28–29; 4.119.

The rest of the readings distinguishing the group VH are:

ProL. 32, 52, 58.

1.9, 22, 39, 68, 72, 78, 90, 98, 105, 121, 127, 134, 139, 155, 168.

2.4, 9, 23, 58 (61), 64 (67), 70 (73), 80 (84), 81 (85), 84 (88), 104 (109), 128 (134), 131 (144), 190 (204).

3.1, 10, 14, 25 (27), 32 (34), 33 (35), 39 (41), 69 (72), 78 (81), 84 (87), 114 (122), 117 (125), 144 (152), 175 (183), 191 (199), 206 (214), 212 (220), 214 (222), 223 (231), 242 (251), 251 (260).

4.1, 17, 24, 39, 50, 66, 69, 77, 78, 112, 128, 140, 144.

5.8, 50, 57 (58), 66 (67), 98 (99), 133 (134), 158 (159), 170 (171), 175 (176), 205 (213), 209 (217), 220 (228), 243 (251), 251 (259).

6.2 (4), 24 (27), 30 (33), 35 (38).

7.3, 26 (27), 32 (33), 41 (42), 62 (63), 69 (70), 73 (78), 124 (129), 127 (132), 148 (153), 179 (186), 206 (213), 221 (228), 243 (250), 247 (254), 252 (259), 253 (260), 274 (281), 278 (285), 281 (289), 284 (292), 294 (302), 296 (304).

8.5, 17, 44, 53 (54), 54 (55), 58 (59), 61 (62), 72 (73), 81 (82), 110 (112).

WDiLTH₂DURT₂AH₃—THE GROUP *y*

All the remaining twelve MSS belong to one other main group, *y*, though the number of common errors and deviations is small compared to those of *x*. The small number of common errors in its descendants, however, means only that *y* was a very good transcript of the Original.

The errors common to all, or practically all, of the MSS of *y* are as follows:

An erroneous omission occurs in 5.152 (153). VH and the B-text read:

Hastou ouȝt I ȝi pors quod he, eny hote spices?

TH₂DRT₂H₃WDi omit "ouȝt I ȝi pors." UAIL omit "I ȝi pors." "I ȝi pors" was accidentally omitted in the source of all twelve MSS, while various archetypes and individuals thereupon each intentionally omitted "ouȝt," feeling it to be superfluous and meaningless.

The omission of one line, 5.162 (163), from all the MSS but one small subordinate subgroup is further evidence of common ancestry. The line reads:

Sire pers of pridy and pernel of Flaundres.

It is present in the B-text, in VH, and in T₂AH₃, but is omitted in TH₂DURWDiLI. The subordinate position of the little group T₂AH₃ renders it impossible that the presence of the line in the ancestor of that group represents the tradition from *y*, and the fact that the archetype of these three MSS was not infrequently contaminated from the B-text explains the presence of the line in the descendants of that archetype.

In 5.99 (100) *x* has "aswagen hit vnneȝe." For "vnneȝe" *y* has "an vnche." The reading in *y* seems to be of the sort more probably derived from that of *x* by scribal sophistication than vice versa. If this is so, then the reading of the twelve MSS is evidence of the group. In 6.88 (91) VT₂H₃ (H and A defective) correctly have "ones" at the end, while the MSS of *y* (except T₂H₃) have it erroneously at the beginning of line 89 (92). The presence of the correct reading in the minor subgroup T₂H₃ means nothing but contamination from B, or perhaps conjectural restoration in their ancestor.

In 2.87 (91) *x* has "hure," while *y* has "mede." The reading of *x* alliterates, making the line read:

Worpi is ȝe werkman his hure to haue.

This alliteration within each half-line is not unknown in the A-text. Cf. 1.1; 3.199 (207).

8.62 (63) reads:

Sipen ȝe sen it is so, sewip to þe beste.

"So" is the reading of *x* and *z*. *y* has "pus" ("soþ," W; "this," Di). *x* alliterates, but *y* does not. The reading of W is merely conjectural emendation, for Di, W's sister MS, has a reading obviously based on "thus."

In 1.148 the Critical Text is:

To hem þat hongide him hyȝe & his herte pirlide.

For "hyȝe" TH₂DURWDiI read "by." L reads "on cros." For "him hyȝe" A has "on hym." For "hongide him hyȝ" T₂ has "hym hangyd." T₂A are a minor subgroup, and their readings are an obvious attempt to avoid the unintelligible "by," by omitting or changing it. The reading of L ("on cros") is quite clearly of the same sort. In view of L's well-known habit of revising lines to gain superfluous alliteration,¹ it cannot be asserted that L is here deliberately substituting "on cros" for "hyȝe," that is, removing alliteration. The reading might of course be a careless substitution of what amounted to a synonym, but it seems far more likely to be an intentional attempt to give sense to an unintelligible word.²

W AND Di

On the basis of twenty-one deviations and errors, W and Di must be assigned to the position of one subgroup of *y*:

Prol. 44: For "knaues" W has "hyne," Di "hewyn."

1.162: For "wipoute" W has "sanz," Di has "sauns."

1.163: For "lewid as a laumpe þat no liȝt is inne," WDi read "lewed a ping as a lampe wip outen lyght."

2.80 (84): The CT is "sorewe on þi bokes" (for "bokes" HV have "lockes").

For "bokes" W has "chekes," Di has "bokes chekes" (*sic*), with both words in the original hand and ink, and with "bokes" crossed out in the original ink. "Chekes" must have been in the archetype of WDi, but the Di scribe had read or copied the poem enough times from some other archetype to have a strong recollection of "bokes," which he at first wrote. Then looking at his copy, he saw that the reading there was "chekes," and he changed his reading accordingly.

4.70: WDi both omit "king," though in each MS the word is inserted in a different hand from the original.

¹ See Skeat's account of this MS in the E.E.T.S. A-text, p. xxii.

² All MSS of *y* except UT₂A omit "lyk A gleo monnes bicche" in 5.195, and misarrange 195-96 (197-98). *y* omits "hom" in 5.201 (209).

5.165 (166): For "redyng king" WDi have "redekyng."

7.220 (227): Omitted in both MSS.

Other readings where both agree in a deviation are in 3.137 (145); 4.45; 5.9, 125, 145 (146); 6.8 (11); 7.110 (115), 164 (170), 192 (199), 232 (239); 8.55 (56), 63 (64). Still other evidence is in 5.246 (254) and 8.28.¹

THE GROUP TH₂DURT₂AH₃

Within the group *y*, the MSS TH₂DURT₂AH₃ constitute a subgroup. In 2.83 (87), the CT reads: "For Mede is moylere of mendes engendrit."

For "of mendes engendrit" TH₂DUR (H₃A defective) read "of frendis engendrit"; T₂, obviously attempting an emendation on the basis of this, reads "fendes." W omits the line. VH have "a mayden of gode"—clearly from 2.96 (101).

In 5.240 (248) the CT is:

pi wil worp vpon me as I haue wel deseruid.

For "worp" TH₂UA have "werche," DR have "wirche," T₂ has "wirke"; "worth" is in LWDiH₃IHV. Here H₃ agrees with the MSS outside the group, but is undoubtedly restoring conjecturally, or perhaps has a contaminated reading. That it belongs with the main group is proved by its membership in the sub-subgroup T₂AH₃.

In 3.257 (270) VHLWAI read "kuynde wit." TH₂D have "kynde it"; URT₂ have "reson it"; Di has "kynde," omitting "wit" (H₃ defective). The only difficulty here is the reading of A. As this MS is throughout this part of the poem (1.145—6.80) closely related to T₂, its reading must be due to contamination or conjectural emendation (probably the former). The reading of Di consists of the omission of a word, and is not at all the same as that of the group under discussion.

¹ 5.246 (254). The CT reads "not faire." W has "no ferper," Di has "no farder," T₂ has "no ferrer."

8.28. The CT has "myseise." WH have "mesels," Di has "mysselles." When a group of MSS appears as a fixed or constant element in combination with various scattered MSS, if the latter are clearly constituted members of other well-established groups, then the evidence, I take it, tends to argue in favor of common descent for the fixed MSS. For example, if we have such agreements as AB, ABC, ABD, ABE, and if we know that C, D, and E belong to other groups, the evidence confirms the group AB. This is the sort of evidence we have to deal with here.

In 6.94 (97) the CT reads:

And lere þe forto loue hym & his lawes holden.

TH₂DURT₂H₃ omit "hym," which is in VLWI (though V has the first half-line somewhat changed). (H defective. Di is C-text here. A omits this line.)

In 5.160 (161) the CT has "nedelere" ("neldere" HV). TH₂DURT₂ have "myllere" ("mylner" URT₂). AH₃ must show contamination, for they are here, as elsewhere (5.108—7.8), closely connected with T₂. (L changes the whole half-line.)

In 4.84 lack of alliteration characterizes the subgroup, which reads in the second half-line, "he shal do so nomore." WIA have "wil" for "shal," and LDiHV have "wol." "Wil, wol" alliterates.

The CT for 7.112 (117) reads:

We haue no lymes to laboure wiþ, lord þankid be ȝe.

For "lord þankid be ye," TDRH₃ read "lord ygracid be ȝe"; U has "lord ygraced be þe"; T₂ has "lord gyff vs grace." A has "lord grace be ȝe"; H₂ is defective. The CT is determined by VHWLI, which read: "lord þonked be þow," W; "lord I thanked be ȝe," L; "lord þankyð be þe," I; "vr lord we hit þonken," VH. (Di has "lord I graced be thou," which must be a result of contamination.)¹

In 1.153 the CT reads:

For þeiȝ ȝe be trewe of ȝoure tunge, & troweliche wyne.

Instead of "For þeiȝ ȝe" TH₂DRT₂ read "For þi." While U agrees with the other MSS, its position in the subgroup URT₂, and in the sub-subgroup UR, shows that its reading here must be a result of contamination or of emendation by a scribe. T₂ in fact has such a contamination or conjectural emendation. The original has "For þi," changed in a contemporary hand to "For þof ȝe." The reading of A, "Thow ȝe," must be due to the same sort of reason. It is a member of the subgroup URT₂A, and of the sub-subgroup AT₂.

In 7.209 (216) TDURT₂A (H₂ defective) have the first half-line wrongly arranged so as to follow the Latin of the preceding line. The CT is:

¹ The exact situation here perhaps might be regarded as less certain because of the complications furnished by the B- and C-texts. B has "lorde y graced be ȝe"; while C has "lord god we þonkeþ" (C 9.135). But the genealogical positions of the MSS attesting "þonked, þonken," in A render the CT of that version certain.

Facite vobis Amicos.

I wolde not greue god quap peris for al the gold on ground.

TDURT₂A read:

Facite vobis Amicos I wolde not greue god

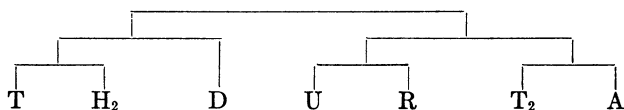
Quap peris for al þe gold on ground.¹

H₃ by conjecture or contamination has the correct arrangement, but that it belongs to the group is proved by its closeness in many readings throughout here to A. AH₃ form a sub-subgroup from 7.69a to the end.

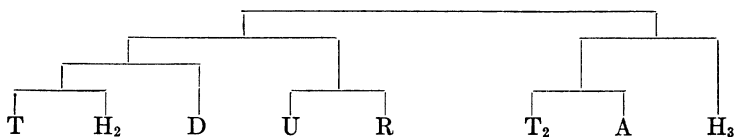
THE SUBGROUPS AMONG TH₂DURT₂AH₃

For MSS TH₂DURT₂AH₃ three different genealogical trees are necessary in the different parts of the poem, as follows:

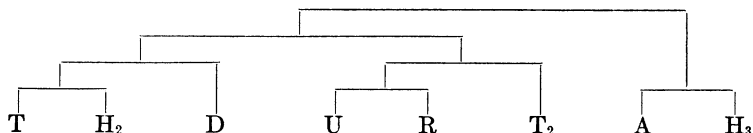
I. Prol. 1 to 1.183 (185). [The last reading for URT₂ is 1.167. A defective to 1.142.]



II. 2.1 [first reading for TH₂DUR is 2.163 (176)] to 7.69 (70); 7.210 (217) to 8.126 (130). [H₃ becomes A-text at 5.106 (107); T₂ defective from 7.210 to the end.]



III. 7.69a (71) to 7.209 (216).



¹ URT₂ omit "I." URT₂ omit "Quap ground." For "Quap ground" T has: "Quap peris for al þe gold on þis ground"; D has "Quod piers for al þe gold þat grouþ on ground"; R has "for al þe gold quod peris þat growþ on þe ground"; A has "Quot peris for alle þe gold on þe ground."

It is most important to note the general principle of textual criticism according to which we require these three different trees for the subgroup comprising our eight MSS. Briefly, this principle depends on the fact that different parts of the same MS were sometimes copied from different ancestors. MS H₃, for instance, is of the B-text to B 5.128, and of the A-text from A 5.106 (107) to 8.111 (113). In a similar manner, the common ancestor of UR was copied in the first part of the poem from a transcript of the ancestor of T₂A. But from about the beginning of passus 2 to at least 8.126 (130) the immediate source of UR was a MS which was a sister of the ancestor of TH₂D. From 7.69 (70) to 7.209 (216), moreover, T₂ was copied from the ancestor of UR, which still belongs with the group TH₂D, while AH₃, still belonging to one subgroup attested by numerous readings, go back to an ancestor which was a sister to the archetype of TH₂DURT₂.

TH₂D

Of the sub-subgroups in this subgroup, we may first discuss TH₂D. Their common errors and deviations run consistently throughout the poem, and are many and important. Some of the most significant errors are:

3.206 (214): "mede," "nede," TH₂D.

7.171 (177): "an hepe"; TD have "In helpe" (H₂ defective).

8.70 (71): "defraudeth"; H₂D have "Gyleth"; T has "kilip."

In 3.82 (85) TH₂D omit "meires and."

TH₂D omit 3.100 (108) and 7.174 (180-81) (H₂ defective).

Deviations clear and important appear in 3.169 (177); 4.24, 148; 5.16, 233 (241); 6.6 (9), 82 (85), 106 (109); 7.168 (174).

Other deviations, not quite so convincing individually, but in their total supporting the group weightily, are: 1.104; 2.82 (86), 123 (129); 4.58, 106, 145, 153; 5.41, 89-91 (90-92), 182 (184), 237 (245); 6.29 (32); 7.160 (166), 116 (121), 218 (225), 262 (269), 112 (117), 140 (145), 192 (199), 302 (310); 8.26, 46 (47), 61 (62), 113 (115).

TH₂

Of the group TH₂D, T and H₂ form a subgroup. Clear errors occur in: 3.71 (74), "richen," "risen," TH₂; 5.252 (260), "po

prongen," "pe wrong," TH₂; 8.10, "riȝtfulliche," "rewfulliche," TH₂.

Common deviations supporting the grouping are in 1.159; 2.144 (157); 5.7, 17, 197 (199), 163 (164); 8.125 (129).

Other deviations, some of them weighty, and in the sum total constituting conclusive evidence, are in 1.59, 72, 110, 135, 138, 171; 2.4, 7; 3.90 (97), 107 (115), 116 (124), 210 (218), 239 (248), 255 (264); 4.48, 73, 119, 129; 5.29, 56 (57), 57 (58), 182 (184), 215 (223), 251 (259), 254 (262); 6.6 (9), 53 (56), 67 (70), 104 (107); 7.35 (36), 80 (85); 8.7, 32, 45, 61 (62), 118 (120).

URT₂ FROM PROLOGUE 1 TO ABOUT 1.183 (185) AND FROM 7.69a (71) TO 7.209 (216)

The evidence grouping URT₂ from the beginning of the poem to about 1.183 (185), and from 7.69a (71) to 7.209 (216) [T₂ defective from 7.210 on], appears quite conclusive. Some of the most important readings are: Prol. 71, "bunchide," "blessid," URT₂; 1.98, "professioun," "propheeye," RT₂ (U defective); 7.91 (96), "pote," URT₂ omit; 7.147 (152), "ordre," "lord," URT₂; 7.173 (179), "bedrede," "blere eyȝed," URT₂; 7.173, "botnid," "aboute," URT₂.

Other readings are in Prol. 1, 13, 14, 17, 21, 29, 32, 37, 77; 1.23, 52; 7.76 (81), 98 (103), 99 (104), 104 (109), 116 (121), 127 (132), 159 (165), 164 (170), 169 (175), 172 (178), 191 (198), 197 (204), 206 (213), 209 (216).

After Prol. 54, R adds two lines, and at the same point T₂ adds four, including the same two:

. . . . on fele halue fonden hem to done
lederes pei be of louedayes and with pe lawe medle. (R)

Parsons with pair proourases [prouisours?] permutyn pair chirches
With al pe besynes of pair body pe better to haue
Vicars on fele halue fandyn faim to Done
Leders ƿai ben of lovedays & with pe lawe mellyth. (T₂)¹

¹ U not only does not contain any of these four lines, but also omits line 54. From the fact that in R the first word of the first added line is omitted, and a blank space left for it, it has been argued by Skeat and Chambers that the word must have been illegible in the ancestor of U and R, and that U must have omitted both lines because of the resultant unintelligibility. The fact, however, that U also omits line 54 seems to me to point to a purely accidental omission of all three lines, rather than to an intentional omission of the two spurious lines on account of the obscurity of one word in the first of

Further evidence for the relation of URT_2 is to be found in the transposition, common to all three, of 7.69a-209 (71-216) to a position immediately preceding 1.180 (182).¹ This dislocation is due to the accidental transference, in the archetype of URT_2 , of the inside leaf (two folios, or four pages) of the third quire of four leaves into the middle of the first quire, also of four leaves.²

THE GROUP TH_2DUR FROM 2.1 TO 7.69 (70)

MSS TH_2DUR form a sub-subgroup from about 2.1 to 7.69 (70), and MSS TH_2DURT_2 form a sub-subgroup from that point to the end of the poem (8.126).

In 2.163 (176) $LWDiIAT_2DVH$ read "And gurdeth of gyles hed." TH_2UR quite erroneously read "gederip" for "gurdeth." Though D agrees with the other MSS outside the group, its reading

them. Scribal habit was to "edit" an obscure or semi-obiterated word into an intelligible word. We have enough independent deviations in U to prove that U had this common habit of editing. It is certainly hard to imagine a scribe who would intentionally omit two lines for such a reason, or, indeed, for any reason.

¹ Although the dislocated passage in all three MSS precedes the same line (1.180), however, the situation in two MSS (U and T_2) is involved in some difficulty, which has never been adequately noticed or discussed. In U the line preceding the shifted matter is not 1.179 (181), as we should expect, but 2.23. That is, 1.180 to 2.23 is given twice, once before, and again after, the transposed passage. In T_2 the transposed passage follows not 1.179, but 1.182. Thus in this MS three lines (1.180-82) are repeated. In R the line preceding the dislocation is correctly 1.179. The latter MS undoubtedly represents the original condition of the archetype of URT_2 . But how account for the repetitions in the other two MSS? Skeat, who discusses the problem in MS U, believed that U had been copied from two MSS at this point (E.E.T.S. A-text, p. xx). But against this it must be urged that U and the repeated fragment (called U by Skeat) have several peculiar deviations and errors in common, thus postulating a single archetype. The most probable explanation seems to me to be that in an immediately preceding ancestor of each MS, independently, someone noticed the dislocation between 1.179 and the adjacent 7.69a. Then, either remembering (from some previous familiarity with the poem), or discovering that there were some lines about four pages later that fitted in after 1.179, the possessor of the MS in each case began copying the correctly following lines into the proper place in the margin, or, perhaps, in the case of U (as the repetition is so long), on a bit of inserted parchment. In the case of the ancestor of T_2 , the corrector stopped after three lines, the end—practically—of a logical speech and but one line short of the end of the passus. In the case of U, the corrector kept on into passus 2, for some reason, perhaps because his bit of inserted parchment was just large enough, to line 23.

² If we calculate about 36 lines to a page, the archetype contained just enough lines to fill the four folios preceding the point of incorrect insertion. At 36 lines per page the dislocated passage would fill four pages, or two folios. At 36 lines per page, the passage between the insertion and 7.69a would fill fifteen folios, that is, it would fill the second four folios of the first quire, the eight of the second, and the three of the third preceding the point of removal of the dislocated passage. The quires must have been left unsewed while being copied. The inside leaf of the third must have fallen out, and then must have been stuffed back into the center of the first, instead of the third, quire, and then must have been sewed there. Afterward the copies were made, perpetuating the error.

must represent contamination or conjecture, as this MS is closely connected with TH₂.

In 3.83 (86) the other MSS have "And told hem pis teeme" (except H, which has "lo pis was his teme"), but TH₂DUR have "And tok hym pis teeme."

In 4.19 the CT is "wytful gerpis," the reading of LWDiAID ("full wyght girthes," T₂; "swipe fele gурpis," HV). TH₂UR read "riȝtful gerpis." D again disagrees with the group, but through contamination or conjecture.

3.240 (249) is omitted in TH₂DU. It must have been restored in R by contamination from a MS outside the group.

In 3.137-8 (145-6) the CT has "to holde" correctly at the beginning of line 138, while TH₂DUR have the phrase incorrectly at the end of line 137.

In 4.113 the CT has "graue wiȝ kynges coroun," but TH₂DUR have incorrectly "ygraue wiȝ kinges coyn."

In 5.43 the words "ran" and "and" are omitted in TH₂DUR.

Other agreements, most of them striking, are in 3.99 (107), 113 (121), 119 (127), 130 (138), 254 (263), 266 (275); 4.4, 154; 5.16, 17, 34, 71, (72), 90 (91), 92 (93), 94 (95), 108-9 (109-10), 113 (114), 130 (131), 215 (223); 6.120 (123); 7.18, 31 (32), 29 (30).

Several agreements group TH₂DURT₂ from 7.69a (71) to 7.209 (216). In 7.72 (77) TDURT₂ (H₂ defective) omit "pis." In 7.75 (80) TDURT₂ (H₂ defective) add "For" at the beginning of the line. In 7.140 (145) TDUR (H₂ defective) add "away" (T₂ omits the line). In 7.181 (188) TDUR (H₂ defective) have "asserue" for "deserue"; T₂ has "serue." In 7.139-40 (144-45) TH₂DURT₂H have "of pi flour" incorrectly at the end of line 139. (V has it in the middle of the line, considerably changing the rest of the line, as does also H.) AH₃LWDiI have the phrase correctly at the beginning of line 140. The error must have occurred in VH independently of TH₂DURT₂.

In 7.161 (167) the CT is "he ȝede hem betwene" ("he ȝed hem," H₃I) "ȝede hem," H; "he wente hem," A; "he ȝede so," W; "had hyhyd," Di; "busked heom," L; "I bot hem," V); TDUR read "he hadde"; T₂ reads "pai abade," which seems to be a corruption based on the reading of TDUR. (T₂ omits "betwene.")

TDURT₂ omit 7.207 (214) (H₂ defective).

DURT₂ (H₂ defective) misarrange 7.204-9 (211-16) similarly. D, with which the other three substantially agree, has them as follows:

And alle maner men þat þou myȝt aspyen þat nedy ben or naked
And nouȝt haue to spende with mete or with mone
late make þe frendes þer with & so Matheu vs teches
Facite vobis amicos I wold not god greue.

T, which had the line similarly misarranged in its "copy," has arranged them more nearly correctly, but has had to supply a conjectural second half-line for line 206 (213). T reads:

And alle maner of men þat þou miȝte aspien
þat nedy ben or nakid & nouȝt han to spende
Wiþ mete or mone let make hem at ese
And make þe Frendis þer miþ for so matheu vs techiþ.

The CT for these lines reads:

And alle maner of men þat þou miȝte aspien
þat nedy ben or nakid & nouȝt han to spende
Wiþ mete or wiþ mone let hem be þe betere¹
Or wiþ werk or wiþ word whiles þou art here
Make þe Frendis þer wiþ and so matheu vs techiþ.

THE MINOR GROUP UR

The citations proving close connection between U and R are probably more numerous and convincing than for any other group, except perhaps VH.

The clearest errors, some of them mere absurd blunders, occur in Prol. 85, where for "seruide" UR have "pletiden"; in 2.42 (44) for "teldit" UR have "tight"; in 2.168 (181) for "preyour" UR have "tresour"; in 3.74 (77) for "burgages" UR have "bargaynes"; in 3.169 (177) for "menske" UR have "mylde"; in 2.121 (127) for "ioye" UR have "lawe"; in 3.183 (191) for "mournyng to leue" UR have "fro morwe til eue"; in 5.60 (61) for "in þe palesie" U has "palatik," R has "palyk"; in 5.131 (132) for "aunsel dede" UR have "almesdede"; in 6.29 (32) for "to sowen and to setten" UR have "now and sithe"; in 7.30 (31) for "wastours" UR have "watris."

¹ For "let hem be þe betere," the reading of LWDIAHsI, V has "mak hem fare þe betere"; H has "lete hem fare þe better."

Both MSS omit lines 2.11, 2.24-25, 5.220 (228), 6.108 (111).

Other common deviations are to be found in Prol. 86, 102, 106; 1.1, 130, 152; 2.45 (47), 53 (56), 54 (57), 58 (61), 77 (81), 156 (169); 3.1, 44 (46), 62 (64), 120 (128), 164 (172), 174 (182), 175 (183), 231 (240), 259 (266), 267 (276); 4.24, 30, 60, 61, 131; 5.37, 57 (58), 87 (88), 91 (92), 92 (93), 113 (114), 117 (118), 142 (143), 167 (168), 177 (178), 179 (180), 184 (186), 222 (230) 224 (232), 230 (238), 252 (260); 6.35 (38), 52 (55), 55 (58), 67 (70), 97 (100), 98 (101), 103 (106), 104 (107); 7.10, 29 (30), 39 (40), 52 (53), 66 (67), 119 (124), 140 (145), 213 (220), 233 (240), 238 (245), 279 (287), 283 (291); 8.21, 84 (85), 118 (120).

THE MINOR GROUP T₂AH₃

The evidence for grouping T₂ and A from 1.143, where A begins, to 5.105 (106), to which H₃ is B-text, includes: 1.145: T₂A omit "pite," though in T₂ a different hand, in a blacker ink, has inserted it after "peple"; 2.9: for "I-purfilid" T₂ has "puryd," and A has "I purid." In 3.87 (90) for "in zoupe or in elde" T₂ has "in thoght or in dede," and A has "in pouth or indede." In 4.38 for "gade-lynges" T₂A have "goslynges." Other readings supporting the group are in 1.151, 152, 157, 180 (182); 2.5-6, 16, 148 (161); 3.11, 21 (23), 259 (266), 270 (279); 4.24, 42, 50-51, 58, 47, 67, 82, 98, 100, 129, 130, 147; 5.23, 31, 32, 77 (78), 78 (79).

Some of the strongest evidence for grouping T₂AH₃ from about 5.106 (107) to about 7.69 (70) is: In 5.145 (146) instead of "forto go to shrift," T₂ reads "to gang on hy way" (*sic*), A has "to gon his wey," and H₃ has "to gon on hys weyȝe." After 6.81 (84) T₂AH₃ add three lines, the first unique, the second and third from the B- or C-text. Other readings are in: 5.108-9 (109-10), 114 (115), 115 (116), 129 (130), 136 (137), 141 (142), 146 (147), 158 (159), 189 (191), 206 (214), 216 (224), 242 (250); 6.1 (3), 28 (31), 58 (61).

In passus 7, after T₂ has become defective at line 209 (216), some of the evidence for grouping AH₃ is: In 7.218 (225) WDiH have "mouthed," URI have "mouthith," L has "techeth," T has "nempniþ," D has "nemened," V has "Mommep," but AH₃ read "mevith, meuyth." Other readings occur in: 7.219 (226), 239 (246), 266 (273); 8.18, 21, 98 (99), 99 (100).

The evidence for the minor subgroup T₂A within the subgroup T₂AH₃, after H₃ has become A-text, includes: In 5.163 (164) for "dykere" T₂A read "Drinker" (VH read "disschere"); T₂A omit line 5.165 (166). In 5.189 (191) for "ygulpid" T₂A read "gobbyd." (H₃ has "I clobbyd," H₂D have "gluppid," HV have "ygloppid.") In 5.248 (256) for "gilt" T₂A read "coulpe." In 6.2 (4) for "ouer valeis" T₂A read "oure bankes." In 5.125 (126) for "a pakke nedle" T₂ reads "bat nedyls," A reads "abatnedil" (H₃ has "a betyngnedyl").

The group AH₃ subsequent to 7.69 (70) is attested by the following: In 7.82 (87) for "mynde" AH₃ read "messe." In 7.138 (143) for "pilide" H₃ reads "pynynd," A reads "foule pyne" (T₂ has "pelyd"). Other evidence, just as strong, is in 7.172 (178), 174 (180-81), 183 (190), 189 (196).

THE THIRD MAIN GROUP—*z*

A careful collation of the B-text, so far as the CT of B can be safely determined from the variant readings of the E.E.T.S. edition, has shown that B contains none of the errors and omissions of *x*, and none of those belonging to *y* or any of the subgroups of *y*. This leads us to the obvious conclusion that *z*—that MS of A which B used as the basis of his recension—must have been derived from the Original in a line of descent independent of either *x* or *y*. Consequently, whenever *x* and *y* differ, but when neither is clearly in error, we have the independent evidence of B to help us in determining the reading of the Original, for when two independent lines of MS descent agree against a third, the agreement of the two must determine the critical reading. In spite of the large number of individual changes introduced by B, and in spite of the number of corruptions and errors in its A-text original, *z*, which can be discovered because the MSS of A generally agree unanimously, or nearly so, whenever B deviates, B is thus of the greatest value to the student of the A-text. It is only when we have three different readings, one in *x*, one in *y*, and another in *z*, and when neither *x* nor *y* is obviously correct, that we are without reliable genealogical evidence of the reading of the Original of A. In cases like this, we are logically obliged to follow the reading of that group which is less often in

error whenever error can be determined. As *y* furnishes a much better tradition than *x*, we must therefore rely upon *y* in cases of this sort. The CT, of course, can never safely adopt the reading of B alone, however tempting that reading may appear.¹

CHAMBERS AND GRATTAN ON THE CRITICAL TEXT

Students who compare this account of the genealogical relations of the MSS of the A-version of "Piers the Plowman" with that given several years ago by R. W. Chambers and J. H. G. Grattan,² and who have read Mr. Chambers' later paper³ in which he discusses some matters of the text, will note some wide discrepancies between their results and mine. Nine MSS (LIWDiDURAH₃) are either not located in their genealogical tree or in whole or in part are located elsewhere than in mine. Such different results cannot be due to mere difference in opinion. How then are they to be accounted for?

First, the method employed by these students has been at fault; secondly, they have stated their opinions before they have had the necessary material in hand to formulate sound opinions; and, thirdly, they have not collected the evidence afforded by MS readings which were perfectly accessible.

The most serious fault in their presentation is that they cite almost no specific evidence whatever for their classification of the MSS. They cite none of the errors and deviations, either by quotation or line number, which they have made the basis of their classification. Consequently, other students who would like to know what Chambers and Grattan regard as errors, significant or insignificant, are left absolutely in the dark.⁴

In view of their subsequent erroneous location of several MSS, one would say that the establishment of their group *Tau* (which comprises part of my group *y*) is a matter of the greatest importance.

¹ It is well to call attention to the insecurity of the text of B. Skeat has collated only six of the fifteen MSS of that text, and our information may therefore sometimes be inadequate to settle the critical reading. It will require some years, however, to collate all the other MSS of B, and in the meantime we shall have to rely on the tentative text ascertainable from our incomplete materials. It may ultimately, therefore, be necessary to revise a few of our readings of A, which are sound only in so far as we can now determine the CT of B.

² "The Text of 'Piers Plowman,'" *Modern Language Review*, IV, 357-89.

³ "The Original Form of the A-Text of 'Piers Plowman,'" *ibid.*, VI, 302-23.

⁴ See *Modern Language Review*, IV, 372, 380, 382.

Yet for their grounds we are merely referred to Skeat's E.E.T.S. footnotes: "There is no necessity to argue, what has been recognized by all students of the subject, that V and H form one group, and T and U another. If anyone wishes to satisfy himself of this afresh, five minutes' study of Skeat's footnotes, taken at random anywhere, would prove it."¹

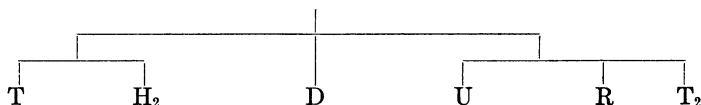
Five minutes of study at random has failed to reveal the whole truth about T and U to Chambers and Grattan. If Skeat's cited MSS were the only ones extant, then V and H would form one main group, and T and U would be the main representatives of the other main group. But many more MSS are extant. And attentive study shows that T and U are not primary representatives of a main group, but are merely members of a subgroup of that main group. The latter fact is of the most vital importance when the text critic attempts to locate other MSS in his tree, and when he begins to use his tree to establish the CT. Chambers and Grattan derive MSS L and I, for example, immediately from the Original, because L and I do not seem to them to possess the most striking errors in T and U. But the most frequent and most striking errors common to T and U are due to several intervening layers of MSS between TU and *y*, while, as we have seen, L and I *are* descended from *y* in lines separate from the TU line.

Still another imperfection in Chambers and Grattan's method is disclosed in their method of classifying MSS W and Di. They assign these two MSS to a subgroup along with T and H₂ because all four add the C-text, from C 12.297 on, to the end of the eleventh passus of the A-text. This grouping is made by Chambers and Grattan in ignorance of what would have been immediately disclosed by a line-by-line collation of T, H₂, W, and Di, namely, that W and Di throughout their A-text parts, not only are not members of the little sub-subgroup TH₂, but are not even members of the much larger group TH₂DURT₂AH₃. W and Di are descended, as I have shown, from *y* in a line independent of any other subgroup of *y*.

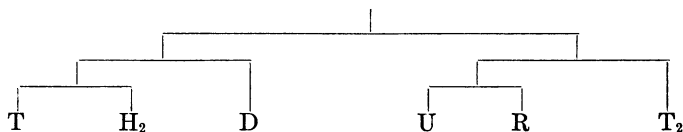
There are many other instances of faulty method, but I select only a few. For example, Chambers and Grattan assume that

¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 373.

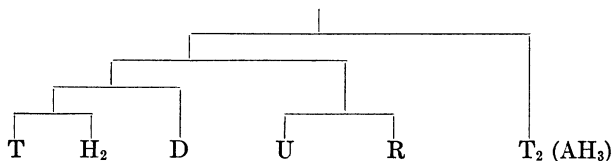
MS D occupies a "middle" position between TH₂ and RUT₂. "Here and there, though rarely, D will enable us to get a better reading than either T or RU supply; but D's chief function will be to decide the balance between the readings of T and of RU, where these differ without a clear advantage on either side."¹ Their tree for the MSS would be as follows:



But we have seen that D is grouped with TH₂ by thirty-six errors and deviations. The correct tree therefore must be:



While, through the middle of the poem it is:



According to this correct tree, whenever D at a given point agrees with URT₂ (AH₃) that agreement establishes the CT for the whole subgroup. Before 2.1, and after 7.70 (75), the two readings, TH₂D and URT₂, are of equal genealogical weight, and the choice between them must be made on the basis of readings outside the subgroup. From 2.1 to 7.69, however, the reading of TH₂D is subordinate genealogically to that of URT₂ (AH₃), and the latter three (or five) establish the reading of the archetype common to all six (or eight).

Again, by their own admission, Chambers and Grattan seriously disturb one's confidence in their ability to distinguish between

¹ *Modern Language Review*, IV, 379.

inferior and superior readings. They even admit that they cannot always observe when a reading which they suppose to be "inferior" is peculiar to a group, and when it is actually attested in the CT by its presence in half of the MSS of the other main group. In discussing the position of L, for example, they say that they "have judged TU inferior to VH" in twenty-two instances.¹ They find that L agrees with VH in fifteen cases, is wanting in one, and agrees with TU in six. Then they scrutinize these six, and discover that they are not really inferior after all. Furthermore, they point out themselves that in two of these six the reading which they have adjudged inferior is not peculiar to TU alone, but is supported by H of the other main group. The readings which they believed inferior were the critically attested readings!

But they practically destroy whatever confidence one has left in their judgment when they come to the discussion of the position of I. They find that I agrees with TU in eleven of the twenty-two readings in which they believe TU to be inferior, the eleven including the above-mentioned six doubtful, which they again dismiss as "inconclusive." Then they say: "The five remaining cases are not very conclusive either." So that just one-half their "inferior" readings seem inconclusively inferior when Chambers and Grattan wish to be rid of them. Here again the reader wishes that citations of these readings had been given, so that some means of testing these curious results might be available.

A case of loose thinking or loose phrasing appears on p. 381: "Further, there are passages where a very early corruption has crept in, *which is common to both the VH group and the TU group* [italics mine]. Here L sometimes shows a reading superior to that of either group. An example is the line referred to above, p. 368 [2.83 (87)]:

For Mede is moylere of Amendes engendred.

Let us see the "corruption . . . which is common to both the VH group and the TU group." TH₂DURT₂² read:

For mede is molere³ of frendis⁴ engendrit.

¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 381.

² A defective here; H₃ is B-text at this point; W omits the line.

³ "molere] medlere," H₂; "mulyer," D; "muliere," URT₂; "moillour," L; "a mewliere," Di; "moylere," I.

⁴ "frendis] fendes," T₂; "frendis of frendis," U (*sic*).

VH read:

For Meede is a Iuwelere¹ A Mayden of goode.

LDiI read:

For mede is moillour² of mendes engendred.

One may legitimately ask, Where is the corruption common to both the VH group and the TU group? For there is no connection whatever between the VH reading and the TU reading. The former is only the second half-line of 2.96 (101), while the latter is obviously descended from an entirely different error, or a gratuitous scribal emendation, in the parent MS of the TU group. There is no "common corruption" in the two groups. If there were, and if the corruption were not present in LDiI, the consequences upon the tree would be very great.

The reason for many of the faults which we have seen is not far to seek. The study was printed before all the evidence was adequately examined, or even collected. In their first paper the authors say: "Many of the above suggestions are put forth only tentatively; for we have not yet had time to sift thoroughly our transcripts and collations."³ Over two years later Chambers says: "I have not yet collated W up to this point." [The end of passus 11.]⁴

Finally we may mention some of the conclusions which Chambers and Grattan would never have reached if they had collected and examined all the evidence.

Because U and R are clearly to be grouped with T₂ (their E) in the early part of the poem, the three MSS are indiscriminately grouped together throughout as one subgroup of *y* (their *Tau*). But, as I have shown above, for over five passus (2.1—7.69) U and R belong in a subgroup with TH₂D, while elsewhere UR belong in a subgroup with T₂AH₃.

The Ashmole MS is dismissed in less than two lines: "Ashmole 1468 combines all possible faults. It is imperfect, corrupt, and contaminated by B- or C-influence."⁵

Regarding H₃, Mr. Chambers writes: "Mr. Grattan and myself have so far been unable to trace any special affinities of Harleian

¹ "Iuweler] medeler," H.

³ *Modern Language Review*, IV, 383.

² See note 3, p. 153.

⁴ *Ibid.*, VI, 313.

⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 383.

3954 to any other MS or group of MSS. It is therefore an independent witness," etc.¹

But as I have shown above, H₃, A, and T₂ are bound together into a minor subgroup by a very large number of common errors and variations; and most of the contaminations from the B-text in MS A are in the source of all three MSS.

It is especially important to consider how Chambers and Grattan have dealt with MSS L and I. They wish, if possible, to discover a MS which does not belong to either of their two main groups, for they wish to use this independent MS to determine the CT whenever their main groups differ, but when neither one is clearly in error. Such a MS they believe they have found in L. In discussing the genealogical position of this MS,² they point out that it usually agrees with TU when VH are in error, and with VH when TUD seem to them to have readings "inferior to VH."

But L cannot be excluded from group *y* merely on the ground that it usually seems to have the correct reading when TUD appear to be wrong. For I have shown that TUD are three members of one subgroup of *y*, and for over five passus members of a sub-subgroup, and that WDi and I comprise two independent subgroups of *y*. Hence the important question is, Does L invariably contain the correct reading when WDi, I, and TH₂DURT₂AH₃ all in common contain a wrong reading? I have shown that in a number of cases all these MSS, including L, have an incorrect reading or an erroneous omission. As L contains no significant deviations in common with any of the other three subgroups of *y*, aside from those possessed by all, it therefore constitutes a fourth subgroup of *y*.

In MS I Chambers and Grattan believe they have found another independent line of transmission from the Original, with perhaps a few deviations in common with *x*, and a few in common with *y*.³ I have shown, however, that I is a member of *y*, though not of the subgroup TH₂DURT₂AH₃.

The essential unsoundness of any critical text based on the assumption that L and I are descended from the Original in a line of descent independent of any other group of MSS is so obvious as to require no comment.

¹ *Ibid.*, VI, 312.

² *Ibid.*, IV, 380 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, IV, 382-83.

DETERMINING THE CRITICAL TEXT

In this last part of my study I shall discuss several concrete problems of the sort that are encountered in the actual construction of the critical text, after all the preliminary work of determining the genealogical tree has been completed, and shall try to show how the tree is used in deciding the critical readings.

It would take too long for me to speculate fully on all the psychological and mechanical reasons for the various sorts of errors, but one or two remarks may be offered. The "average" mediaeval scribe utterly lacked the modern typographical compositor's ideal of conscious fidelity to his "copy." If he was careless or stupid, he introduced several kinds of misreadings into his copy, or omitted lines or words. If, on the other hand, he was a careful or critical reader of his "copy," he was likely to change the sense if he thought it could be improved, thus indulging in what we now call "conjectural emendation," or even editorial rewriting. Sometimes the possessor of a MS compared it with another copy of the same work, and, noticing differences between the two copies, scratched out the words of one MS and substituted those of the other, or added lines not in his MS. We have a great many cases of this in MSS H and H₂, and sporadic cases of it in a number of other MSS of the A-text. A later copy of a MS which had thus been "corrected" would naturally reproduce only the "revised" readings, and the modern text editor would perhaps encounter considerable difficulty in placing such a contaminated MS in his tree. Some contaminations got in unconsciously because the scribe was previously familiar with the work through copying it or reading it in a MS belonging to some other family branch. While carrying a line in his mind between reading it in his "copy" and writing it down, he might unconsciously substitute a formerly read or written term for the one in his "copy." The substitution of inferior or non-alliterating readings, often synonyms, must have been an unconscious process. The scribe merely reproduced the meaning of the line substantially, without caring for exactness. And there must have been many shades and sorts of errors between the conscious emendations and contaminations and the unconscious substitutions.

Then there are errors due to mis-seeing, or to mishearing, or to purely mechanical miswriting. One letter may be misread for another with a similar shape. "h" and "b," "t" and "c," "n" and "u," "e" and "o," "b" and "l" are pairs of letters one of which might be easily misread or miswritten for the other. Words such as "lene," "leue," "loue" might thus be substituted for one another. Or "hye," "by," or "ac," "at," or "beste," "leste" might be confused. All these are variants to be found in our MSS.

The so-called "errors of mishearing" might occur in one of two ways. "Copy" may have been read aloud by one scribe and written by another or others, though there is little positive evidence that this method was practiced in the Middle Ages. These errors seem to me to have much more probably occurred in the work of scribes who belonged to what psychologists call the "auditory type"—individuals who remember in auditory images. Such persons most naturally read aloud, or imagine vividly that they read aloud, material that they wish to copy. My theory is that most errors of this type in mediaeval MSS occurred in this way, and not through a mishearing of what was being read aloud by another.

We are now ready to discuss some concrete problems.

The easiest sort of error to eliminate is the single reading of T (our base), when all the other MSS agree against it. One case occurs in 1.49:

Cesar þey seide we se wel ichone.

"þey] panne," T; "þey *rest*."

The reading peculiar to one sub-subgroup is the next to the easiest to eliminate. One occurs in 5.16:

Piries and plomtrees wern puffed to þe erþe.

"plomtrees] plantes," TH₂D.

Even the reading of a whole main group must be held to be of no weight critically if the other main groups agree against it. A case is in 1.37:

Pat is þe wrecchide world þe to betraye.

"wrecchide," TH₂DRT₂LWDiI z; "wicked," HV (UAH₃ defective).

These three problems are all simple. A more complicated one comes in Prol. 42:

Fayteden for here foode fouȝten at þe ale.

"Fayteden H] Flite panne," T; "Faytours," H₂; "Flytteden &," D; "pei fliten," URT₂; "Faytours," L; "They fayed," W; "And flyted fast," Di (Di is full of contaminations from the C-text in the Prol., but the C-text here reads "Faytynge"); "Fayted," I; "Feyneden hem," V; "Fayteden," z (AH₃ defective). The reading of TDURT₂ supports "Fliten" for this subgroup of *y*. H₂ must be a contamination. But L, I, and W support "Fayteden." Di goes strongly against its sister, W, in favor of "Fliten," for Di's reading, which is in disagreement with that of the C-text, must be the original reading of its A-text ancestor. "Fayteden" of H is supported by "Feyneden hem" of V, which seems to be a substitution of a synonym for H's reading, the reading of *x*. "Fayteden" in z supports H (and *x*) and practically three of the subgroups of *y*. The CT must therefore be "Fayteden."

A more complicated problem, or pair of problems, is to be found in 5.221 (229).

panne sat sleupe vp & seynide hym faste.

"seynide hym faste," TH₂U]; "semed hym faste," D; "shryned (or shryued?) him faste," R; "signed him faste," L; "sayned hem fast," W; "seynyd hym ofte," Di; "schraffe hym full fast," T₂; "syhed ful faste," A; "syhede faste," H₃; "crowchid him fast," I; "seide to hym siluen," H; "sikede sore," V; "seyned hym swithe," z.

Three branches of *y* attest "seynide"—L, WDi, and I, which has an obvious substitution of a synonym—"crossed" for "signed." Of the fourth subgroup of *y*, four MSS (all belonging to one sub-subgroup) support "seynide." They are TH₂DU. R, the sister of U, with "shryned," an error due to an imperfect auditory image, illuminates the step that must have existed in the ancestor of T₂, which had "shryned," which in turn was misread "shryued," and then changed to "schraffe"; "syhed" in AH₃ looks like the result of a careless visual image of "syned," or perhaps of some mechanical carelessness at some stage of transmission. The reading of *x* can hardly be reconstructed with certainty, but *x* was so careless that the reading may have been that of H, "seide to hym syluen"; for "seide" may have resulted from the omission of the horizontal nasal stroke from above the "i." V's "sykede sore" may be an attempt to improve some such reading as that of H, or it may be for

"sihede," which may have arisen in the same way that it did in AH₃. We see then that two and a half of the four subgroups of *y* have "seynde," while the other MSS of *y* have readings probably or obviously derived from "seynde." *z* has "seyned." Both V and H may come from "seynde." The CT must therefore be "seynde."

As the last word in the line, *y* has "faste," and *z* has "swipe." *x* is not certain, but may have had V's reading, "sore." *z* and *x* have four alliterating syllables in the line, an arrangement of course not unknown to the A-text, but rather unusual. Further, *z*'s inclination to change readings rather whimsically casts a great deal of doubt on "swithe." *x* has such a multitude of clear errors, deviations and demonstrable substitutions that even if we could certainly determine its reading, we could not rely on it as surely as we usually can on that of *y*, which, we have seen, has very few errors. And, further, when *x* and *y* differ, with readings between which there is little or no choice, if *z* supports either, it almost invariably supports *y*. All probability therefore favors *y*'s "faste." The CT for the half-line therefore should read, "seynde hym faste."

Another interesting problem may be found in 6.67 (70):

panne shalt pou blenche at a bergh bere no fals wytnesse.

"bergh WDi] berwh," L; "berwe," D; "bourne," TH₂; "brige," T₂; "brook," H₃; "bowhe," I; "brok," V; "berghe," *z* (H defective); "at a bergh] abak," UR; A omits (U inserts "see" before "blenche").

The reading "bourne," "brook," of TH₂H₃V is rendered improbable by both the context and the genealogical evidence. The author has already used a brook in his symbolical geography, and named it "be buxum of speche" (line 53). And of the feature in our line, whatever for the moment we may consider it likely to be, he says in the two lines following:

He is fripid in wiþ floreyne & opere fees manye;
Loke pou plukke no plante þere for peril of þi soule.

This description is obviously unsuitable for a brook, but perfectly appropriate for a hill.

The genealogical evidence of L and WDi, forming two branches of *y*, favors "bergh"; "bowhe" of I may have an "o" for an "er"; "berwe" of D supports that reading for the ancestor of TH₂D, for

D branches off collaterally with TH₂, being by itself of as much genealogical weight as TH₂ combined; "brige" of T₂ might have resulted from an erroneous expansion of "b^lge," which even might have been miswritten as "b^lge." It is quite conceivable that "brok" of V and H₃ may have been the result of a similar error. The abbreviation for "er" might have been misread for that of "ur," "ru," while "k" and "w" in fourteenth-century handwriting look a great deal alike. The reading of UR, "abak," can hardly be attributed to any classifiable sort of error, though it might be a conjectural emendation of "abrok." *z* has "berghe." *y* and *z* therefore support "bergh," and this is to be adopted into the CT.

"Other things being equal," the genealogical evidence must determine the CT. But sometimes other things are not equal. We may perhaps close with the discussion of a problem of this kind. It occurs in 2.198 (212):

And ek wep & wrang whan heo was atachid.

"wrang," TH₂DURWDiz]; "wrong hire hondes," LAIHV (T₂ omits the line).

Here, so far as the MSS strictly of the A-text are concerned, "wrong hire hondes" is critically attested in the Original. But other elements must enter the problem. On the principle of the *lectio difficilior*, "hire hondes" would naturally be rejected by the text critic if the evidence were evenly balanced, for the inclusion of these words in the phrase certainly makes it the "easier reading." That is, its presence would be more probably the result of scribal conjectural emendation than its absence would be due to intentional omission. The absence of the words in TH₂DUR and in WDi is evidence in two of the four subgroups of *y* in favor of its omission. On the other hand, L and I are the other two subgroups of *y*, and are of equal genealogical weight with the former two subgroups. L, I, and VH (group *x*), and also MS A, a member of the same subgroup with TH₂DUR, all attest the presence of the words in the CT. Might not the omission of the words be due to the carelessness of two scribes at some points of transmission of parts of group *y*? On the other hand, the third main group *z* omits the words; one and one-half main groups support each reading. Finally, in a line

outside of "Piers Plowman," fully attested by MS evidence and meter, the verb "wringen" appears in this meaning without "the handes":

And lat him care and wepe and wringe and waille.¹

We must, I feel, attribute the presence of "hire hondes" to several independent inclinations to emend, or, rather, to write the obvious for the slightly more idiomatic phrase, on the part of the facile editor-scribe. The CT therefore must omit "hire hondes." Here "other things are not equal."

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¹ "The Clerk's Tale," E 1212, *Oxford Chaucer*. Note also *Le Morte Arthur* (Harl. MS 2252), Furnivall, line 3931, and line 3746:

Alle nyght gan he wepe and wrynge
And went aboute as he were wode.

Also *Cursor Mundi*, 23962:

I se him [Christ] hang, i se hir [Mary] wring,
þe car all of þat cumli king.—MSS GCE.

And observe the scribal editing in MS F:

hir loueli fingris ho did wringe, etc.